

LITHUANIANS OFFER NEW CONCESSIONS TO AVOID BLOCKADE

TELEGRAM TO GORBACHEV

Soviet Citizenship and Army Service to Be Respected, Prime Minister Says

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MOSCOW, April 16 — Lithuania is prepared to compromise on some of the independence measures that drove Moscow to threaten severe economic sanctions against the republic, the Lithuanian Prime Minister said today.

Calling the Lithuanian position "a compromise, not a retreat," the official, Kazimiera Prunskiene, said in a telephone interview that Lithuania would permit Soviet citizens living in the republic to retain their Soviet citizenship while continuing to live in their houses and apartments and work at their jobs, despite Lithuania's plans to introduce new identity papers for citizens.

She also said that Lithuania was willing to allow young men to serve in the Soviet Army if they so desired, and that these and other positions had been described in a telegram to President Mikhail S. Gorbachev.

Hard Line From Moscow

Mr. Gorbachev issued an ultimatum to Lithuania on Friday night, saying that if the republic did not revoke within 48 hours some of the strongest legislation it has passed since declaring its independence from the Soviet Union on March 11, the Kremlin would order other republics to start cutting off crucial supplies.

Among Mr. Gorbachev's demands was the repeal of Lithuania's plan to introduce citizen identity cards and of a decision to boycott the spring military draft.

Mr. Gorbachev's warning did not specifically mention what supplies would be halted, saying instead that the order affected goods sold abroad for hard currency, which would include oil, gas and metals.

There appeared to be no attempt today to stop supplies of these goods or other raw materials to the republic, according to spokesmen at several ministries, Parliament and the Council of Ministers.

'Common Ground'

Mrs. Prunskiene said the Lithuanian Government regarded Mr. Gorbachev's ultimatum as a "softening of Moscow's position," because he did not specifically call on the republic to rescind its declaration of independence. She said the Lithuanian leadership "believes we have found common ground where we can meet Moscow part of the way and begin serious negotiations" on the republic's drive for independence.

Mrs. Prunskiene and other Lithuanian officials have insisted that the republic will never back down on the declaration of independence itself. The statement today by the Prime Minister is the strongest concession yet by the fledgling government.

It is not clear how Moscow will respond to the semi-compromises offered by Lithuania, but it is unlikely that the Kremlin will regard the measures as a

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Lithuania Would Yield on Some Points

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fulfillment of its demands.

Moscow has insisted that any republic is entitled to leave the Soviet Union, but only according to very specific provisions recently established by the Soviet Parliament.

Lithuania and its Baltic neighbors, Estonia and Latvia, maintain that they are not bound by the new Soviet laws since they did not voluntarily join the Soviet Union, but were forcibly incorporated by Stalin in 1940.

Since Lithuania issued its declaration on March 11, Moscow has repeatedly sought to keep the republic from leaving the union. Its tactics included statements and demands, the dispatch of a column of more than 100 tanks and other military vehicles through the center of Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital, as its Parliament met in the early morning, and a roundup of Lithuanians who had left their Soviet Army units after the declaration of independence.

Whose Conscription?

The Kremlin has also continued to call for an end to orders issued by Lithuania, demanding, for example, that all Lithuanian conscripts answer their call to service. But with their offer today, the Lithuanians are now saying only that they will not stand in the way of young men willing to serve. They have not said that they will resume the draft.

The Lithuanians seem to have more closely complied with the strongest demand, regarding citizenship. The re-

public is now saying that it will not require identity cards of all residents and will consider laws to protect the rights of Soviet citizens in the republic. The cards are, in effect, temporary citizenship certificates to be used until passports can be issued.

The most recent Lithuanian position was drawn up at a special session held today, Easter Monday, an official holiday in the predominantly Roman

Under threat of blockade, there is talk of 'a path to compromise.'

Catholic republic. Parliament is scheduled to take up the issue at a session Tuesday.

In the telegram to Mr. Gorbachev suggesting the republic's willingness to partially concede some of the Kremlin's demands, Mrs. Prunskiene said her cabinet "sees no reason that would justify a worsening of economic relations, particularly considering that this might affect not just the Lithuanian republic."

She touched on all the issues that the Soviet leader mentioned in his ultimatum on Friday, as well as some others. She said the Lithuanians were also will-

ing to discuss border issues as well as property claimed by the Soviet Communist Party and the Lithuanian Communist Party, and also factories claimed by the two governments.

Mrs. Prunskiene described the republic as being "at a loss to understand the specific nature of the planned economic sanctions," and she asked for a clarification of the Kremlin's plans so as not to "incorrectly explain them to our people and the world."

In the meantime, Mrs. Prunskiene said that a joint meeting of the Lithuanian government and the republic's legislative leaders had instructed Lithuanian enterprises to continue fulfilling their contractual obligations to their Soviet partners.

Kremlin Flexibility Urged

"We are looking for a path to compromise," Mrs. Prunskiene said in the telephone interview. "And we hope that we are correct in seeing Moscow's newer, softer position as a sign of their willingness to negotiate, too."

In the event that Moscow does carry out a partial or full economic blockade of Lithuania, Mrs. Prunskiene said that she has received "private assurances from representatives of several Western governments that they would find the means to supply us with critical goods" like fuel. She would not name the governments.

Western journalists have been barred by Moscow from traveling to Lithuania. They rely on telephone interviews and the official Soviet press to get information on the situation there.